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ABSTRACT

This survey of Montgomery County (Maryland) Public Schools was done to answer the following four questions about student discipline: (1) To what extent is student discipline perceived to be a problem? (2) What are the perceived causes of student behavioral and discipline problems? (3) How are the schools planning and administering discipline? and (4) How do schools enforce discipline and how effective are the approaches? The staff of 27 randomly selected schools and a limited number of parents were surveyed. The findings show that discipline is not seen as a significant problem and that where a discipline problem exists, it is limited in scope and severity. The three major causes of misbehavior identified in the survey are (1) inability of students to perform satisfactorily, (2) disrespect for authority, and (3) inability of teachers to effectively communicate with some students. The survey also found that schools follow existing discipline policy closely and feel it to be effective. Administrators agreed in their ratings of the effectiveness of seven common disciplinary actions used by the schools. They gave the highest ratings to "formally reporting a student to the principal" and "calling a student's parent or guardian." The responses of the parent sample were similar to those of school staff. The survey found that the district need not overly concern itself with discipline issues. Included are three extensive appendixes of the data collected in the survey. (MD)

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MONTGOMERY COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

A Survey of MCPS Personnel on Student Behavior and Discipline

September 1983

Dr. Wilmer S. Cody
Superintendent of Schools

Prepared by the Department of Educational Accountability

EA 017 119

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rockville, Maryland

A SURVEY OF MCPS PERSONNEL ON STUDENT BEHAVIOR AND DISCIPLINE

by

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A SURVEY OF MCPS PERSONNEL ON STUDENT BEHAVIOR AND DISCIPLINE

In September, 1980, the Board of Education of Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) appointed the Task Force on Student Behavior and Discipline. The committee had as one of its major charges to examine the general and behavioral discipline problems in the schools for the purpose of making relevant policy recommendations to the Board.

During May of 1981, the committee administered a survey, developed by the National Education Association (NEA), to approximately 1,500 MCPS teachers and administrators to obtain information regarding the state of student behavior and discipline in the schools. The findings from the survey presented a comparatively favorable picture of discipline in MCPS; however, the findings were suspect due to inadequacies in the instrumentation used to obtain the data. A review of the NEA instrumentation by the Department of Educational Accountability (DEA) revealed many ambiguously stated questions and biased response alternatives. These deficiencies resulted in findings which were of minimal use and which may have presented a less than complete picture of discipline problems in MCPS. To remedy these deficiencies, DEA, at the request of the deputy superintendent and the Board of Education's Task Force on Student Behavior and Discipline, conducted a second survey in the spring of 1983.

The purpose of the second survey of school staff was to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent are student behavior and discipline perceived by school staff to be a problem?

2. What are the perceived causes of student behavioral and discipline problems in MCPS?

3. How do schools administer and plan for discipline in MCPS? Are MCPS and local school discipline plans effective in reducing discipline problems? Do staff have enough authority to maintain discipline in their classrooms and schools?

4. How do schools approach the enforcement of discipline? How effective are the approaches for reducing student misconduct?

School staff at all levels were surveyed in 27 randomly selected MCPS schools. Survey instruments addressed the four research questions stated previously. The sample of schools was stratified by administrative area and school level. Of the approximately 2,100 persons to whom the survey was sent by way of the PONY, responses were received from 1,703 persons, for an impressively high total response rate of 82 percent. The respondents represent three different groups of MCPS employees: (1) school administrators (such as principals and assistant principals), counselors, and media specialists; (2) classroom teachers; and (3) supporting services staff (such as secretaries and building services workers). In addition, a

limited survey of parents was conducted to pilot test instruments and gather preliminary data on their perceptions of discipline in MCPS. For the parent survey, a random sample of parents from 6 of the 27 sample schools was interviewed by telephone. Interviews were completed with 112 families.

FINDINGS

EXTENT OF THE PROBLEM

The study shows that, overall, discipline is not seen as a significant problem in MCPS. Misbehavior, where it exists, is limited in scope and severity. Specifically:

- Overall, nearly 75 percent of staff surveyed reported that discipline is not a significant problem in their schools.

- At the intermediate level, staff differ among themselves to some degree regarding whether a problem exists. While student behavior is generally not viewed as a significant problem by principals, assistant principals, counselors, media specialists, and the majority of classroom teachers and supporting services workers, some teachers and supporting services workers evaluate the situation differently. Forty-eight percent of the teachers and supporting services staff at the intermediate level report student behavior to be a significant problem.

- Problems, where they occur, are limited in both scope and severity. Classroom teachers have problems dealing with only one or two students per class. The three most frequently occurring student misbehaviors are disruptive behavior (horse-play), tardiness, and use of profanity. Overall, serious student misconduct, such as drug/alcohol use, fighting, attacks on staff, and verbal abuse of staff, seldom occurs; however, when it does occur, it is more likely to occur at the secondary than at the elementary school level.

- Responding to discipline problems can nonetheless be time consuming for at least some school staff. Assistant principals report spending approximately 40 percent of their time administering discipline. While this figure may appear high, it must be viewed in light of the fact that a major responsibility of assistant principals is attending to discipline matters.

CAUSES OF STUDENT BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS

School staff feel that where behavioral problems exist, they are caused both by problems brought to the classroom by the students and inadequacies in the skills of teachers. The three major causes of misbehavior reported are the following:

- The inability of students to perform satisfactorily on school work

- Students' disrespect for authority
- The inability of teachers to effectively communicate with some students

ADMINISTERING AND PLANNING SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

Overall, the data show that the schools follow closely existing BOE policy on school discipline and feel that the policy is effective. Further, staff overwhelmingly report having the necessary authority to maintain discipline. Specifically:

- Nearly all the schools (98 percent) report having a discipline plan and a discipline committee that provides input for disciplinary matters in the school.
- Approximately 80 percent of the school staff feel that they have all the authority needed to maintain a well disciplined school building or classroom, and most classroom teachers feel that support from the school administrator in enforcing discipline is either very strong or adequate.

APPROACHES TO ENFORCEMENT OF DISCIPLINE

School administrators agree in their ratings of the effectiveness of seven common disciplinary actions used by schools to reduce behavioral problems, generally feeling that none are "very effective." While out-of-school and in-school suspension were rated as "very effective" most frequently, only a modest number of administrators (37 and 31 percent, respectively) responded in this manner.

On the other hand, nearly all the actions cited receive support when the responses "very effective" and "somewhat effective" are combined. The disciplinary actions with the largest number of school administrators, 89 percent, saying they are "very effective" or "somewhat effective" in reducing student behavioral problems are "formally reporting students to the principal" and "calling student's parent or guardian." Out-of-school suspension and in-school suspension are similarly rated by 85 percent of the administrators.

PARENT OPINIONS

Although the parent sample was limited, the responses to the survey questions were similar to those of school staff.

- Most parents (85 percent) assess the status of discipline in their child's classroom and school as excellent or satisfactory.
- Teacher and principal enforcement of discipline was rated "just about right" by approximately 75 percent of the parents.

- The vast majority (67 percent) of parents feel that teachers and principals have all the authority they need to maintain discipline.

CONCLUSIONS

The survey data suggest that student behavior and discipline are not significant problems in MCPS. Discipline problems, where they exist, are limited in scope and severity. Board policy regarding discipline is implemented appropriately, and staff feel that they have the support necessary for dealing with insubordination where it occurs.

Although scattered reports of misconduct exist, and will continue to exist, the survey findings strongly suggest that MCPS need not overly concern itself with disciplines issues. Few, if any, changes appear called for, and it appears that maintenance of an already smoothly functioning system should be the system's goal.

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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

In September, 1980, the Board of Education of Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) appointed the Task Force on Student Behavior and Discipline. The committee, composed of parents, students, and staff, had as one of its major charges to examine the general and behavioral discipline problems in the schools for the purpose of making relevant policy recommendations to the Board.

During May of 1981, the committee administered a survey, developed by the National Education Association (NEA), to approximately 1,500 MCPS teachers and administrators for the purpose of obtaining information regarding the state of student behavior and discipline in the schools. While the findings from the survey presented a comparatively favorable picture of discipline in MCPS, the findings were suspect due to inadequacies in the instrumentation used to obtain the data. A review of the instrumentation by the Department of Educational Accountability (DEA) revealed many ambiguously stated questions and biased response alternatives. These deficiencies resulted in findings which were of minimal use and which may have presented a less than complete picture of discipline problems in MCPS. Further, it is questionable as to whether the scope and detail of the areas addressed in the study were sufficient for making relevant policy recommendations.

To remedy these deficiencies, DEA, at the request of the deputy superintendent and the Board of Education's Task Force on Student Behavior and Discipline, conducted a second staff survey in the spring of 1983. The purpose of this survey was to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent are student behavior and discipline perceived by school staff to be a problem?

2. What are the perceived causes of student behavioral and discipline problems in MCPS?

3. How do schools administer and plan for discipline in MCPS? Are MCPS and local school discipline plans effective in reducing discipline problems? Do staff have enough authority to maintain discipline in their classrooms and schools?

4. How do schools approach the enforcement of discipline? How effective are the approaches for reducing student misconduct?

In addition, parents from a subsample of schools participating in the staff survey were asked a similar series of questions regarding their perceptions of discipline in MCPS.[1]

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1. The purpose of the parent survey was to pilot test procedures for a more broad-based survey, which might be implemented in the future, as well as to gain preliminary information on parents' opinions regarding the status of discipline in MCPS.

The purpose of this report is to present the findings from the DEA school survey of discipline.

PROCEDURES FOR SURVEY

School staff at all levels were surveyed in 27 randomly selected MCPS schools. The sample of schools was stratified by administrative area and school level. Table 1 below shows the number of schools selected for the study by school level and administrative area.

TABLE 1

Sample of Schools Selected
for the Discipline Study

School Level	AREA 1		2		3		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Elementary	4	(10)	4	(11)	4	(13)	12	(12)
Intermediate	3	(33)	3	(38)	3	(43)	9	(38)
Senior High	2	(25)	2	(25)	2	(33)	6	(27)
Total	9	(16)	9	(18)	9	(21)	27	(18)

Of the approximately 2,087 staff members to whom the survey was sent, responses were received from 1,703 persons, for an impressively high total response rate of 82 percent. The respondents represent three different groups of MCPS employees: (1) school administrators (such as principals and assistant principals), counselors, and media specialists; (2) classroom teachers; and (3) supporting services staff (such as secretaries and building services workers). Response rates for all three groups were high: school administrators, 98 percent; classroom teachers, 82 percent; and supporting services workers, 81 percent.

Table 2 below presents a description of the respondents sample and the total MCPS school population. The survey sample, respondents, differ from the total MCPS school population in two ways: (1) respondents are more experienced than most school employees, and (2) respondents are more evenly distributed across the different school levels when compared to the total MCPS school population.

TABLE 2

Background Characteristics of Respondents

	Percentage of Respondents	Percentage of Total MCPS Sch Population
JOB CLASSIFICATION		
Principals & Asst Principals	3	2
Counselors	3	2
Media Specialists	1	2
Classroom Teachers	56	56
Teacher Assistants	8	10
Secretaries	5	5
Cafeteria Managers & Workers	8	6
Building Service Workers	8	9
Others	8	7
YEARS WORKING FOR MCPS		
Less than 3 years	15	32
3-5 years	15	22
More than 5 years	70	46
SCHOOL LEVEL		
Elementary	30	48
Intermediate	30	19
Senior High	35	31

Each respondent group's survey instrument varied slightly in content and the questions asked. Some variation was necessary due to the differences in roles and responsibilities of the three respondent groups. Despite the variations, the three instruments are more similar than they are different, allowing the responses from the three groups to be combined to produce an overall picture. The three survey instruments can be found in Appendix A.

The pilot study of parental opinion involved telephone interviews with 112 families randomly selected from 6 of the 27 schools participating in the staff survey.

FINDINGS

This presentation of findings addresses the four research questions described earlier, highlighting, where relevant, differences among respondents or school levels found to be statistically significant. (For those interested in a complete review of all data collected and the results, significant or not, see Appendix B which includes frequency distributions on all questionnaire items for each survey instrument used.) In addition, the

presentation considers, where and when possible, the degree to which school practices as reported appear to be consistent with existing Board of Education policy on school discipline.

Before presenting these findings, it is important to point out that this report intentionally avoids making any comparisons between last year's NEA survey results and the current DEA survey results. Comparisons between the NEA and DEA findings are unwarranted and unadvisable for the following reasons:

1. While both the DEA and NEA surveys cover the same issue, school discipline, the DEA and NEA survey instruments vary greatly in content, wording of questions, and the method/means of responding. Given these differences, interpreting any differences in responses to the two surveys would be difficult, if not impossible.

2. The samples for each survey vary in some important ways. First, DEA's response rate was higher than the NEA response rate (DEA, 82 percent vs. NEA, 72 percent). Second, DEA's sample was also more purposefully selected, controlling for such factors as percentage of minority students enrolled and the schools' suspension rates. Third, DEA's sample includes supporting services workers while NEA's sample did not.

EXTENT OF THE PROBLEM

The DEA survey collected five separate pieces of information from school staff that will be used to gauge or measure the extent to which student behavior is a problem in MCPS schools. The five pieces of information or data sources are the following:

1. Staff views on student behavior, the degree to which student behavior is perceived as a significant problem

2. The number of students teachers report causing discipline problems in their classroom(s)

3. The number of teachers, school administrators, counselors, and media specialists who report having problems with student behavior

4. The number of student behavior problems (incidents) staff report witnessing or being involved in

5. The amount of time school administrators report spending on administering school discipline

Perceptions Regarding Student Discipline Problems

To determine the extent to which student behavior is a significant problem, teachers and supporting services workers were asked, "Do you feel that student behavior is a significant problem in your school? Principals, assistant principals, counselors, and media specialists were asked, "Do you perceive student behavior to be a significant problem in your school?"

Table 3 reports the percentage of staff, by school level and job classification, who said student behavior is a significant problem in their school.

TABLE 3

Percentage of Staff Saying That Behavior
Is a Significant Problem in Their School

Job Classification	School Level Elem.		Interm.		Senior		Total		Total Number of Respondents
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	
Principal	9	1	11	1	0	0	8	2	26
Assistant Principal	50	1	11	1	17	2	17	4	23
Counselor	67	2	17	4	4	1	13	7	52
Media Specialist	27	3	14	1	0	0	17	4	24
Classroom Teacher	18	42	42*	151	28*	90	31	283	910
Supporting Services	13	21	35*	75	22*	46	24	142	585
Total	17	70	37	233	24	139	27	442	1620

*Percentage significantly higher than other staff.

The data clearly show that discipline is generally not perceived to be a significant problem by staff at the elementary, intermediate, or senior high schools. However, at the intermediate grades, some teachers and supporting services workers did report discipline to be a concern.

The data show the following:

- Overall, nearly 75 percent of staff surveyed reported that discipline is not a significant problem in their schools.
- At the intermediate level, staff differ among themselves to some degree regarding whether a problem exists. While student behavior is generally not viewed as a significant problem by principals, assistant principals, counselors, media specialists, and the majority of classroom teachers and supporting services workers, some teachers and supporting services workers evaluate the problem differently. Forty-eight percent of the teachers and supporting services staff at the intermediate level report student behavior to be a significant problem.

Number of Students Causing Discipline Problems

Teachers were asked, "How many students cause discipline problems in the first class of the day that you teach?" The data show that teachers report very few students causing discipline problems and, on the average, report having problems dealing with less than two students in the first class. Specific data for each school level reveal the following means for teachers: at the elementary school level, 1.6 students; at the intermediate school level, 1.4 students; and at the senior high school level, 1.0 students. The mean for the senior high school level is significantly lower than the means for the other two school levels.

Number of Teachers Having Problems with Student Behavior

School administrators (principals and assistant principals), counselors, and media specialists were asked, "Approximately how many teachers on your staff do you perceive as having a problem with student behavior?" The data show that very few teachers are perceived to have problems with student behavior. Staff ability to handle behavior problems, where they exist, clearly appears to be quite strong. On the average, staff report that only 8 percent of the total professional staff in the sample schools have any problems handling student behavior. This means that in an elementary school with 20 professional staff members only one, or at most two, are perceived as having problems with student behavior.

Witness to or Involvement in Student Behavior Incidents

Staff were asked to report how often they had witnessed or had been involved in 15 different student incidents (problems). The 15 behavior incidents are the following:

- Alcohol or Drug Use
- Cutting Class
- Disruptive Behavior (horseplay)
- Extortion
- Insubordination
- Physical Attack on Staff
- Physical Attack on Student
- Profanity
- Smoking
- Storing/Possessing Dangerous Weapon
- Tardiness
- Theft
- Truancy
- Vandalism
- Verbal Abuse of Staff

Data analyses of reported student misconduct reveal the following:

- The three incidents occurring the most frequently, regardless of the school level, are disruptive behavior, tardiness, and use of profanity. In addition, at the secondary school level, cutting class, insubordination, truancy, verbal abuse of staff, and smoking are also witnessed or reported as occurring frequently (see Table 4).

- Overall, serious student misconduct, drug/alcohol use, fighting, attacks on staff, and verbal abuse of staff seldom occur; however,

TABLE 4

Percentage of Staff Saying a Problem Occurs
About Once a Week or Almost Every Day

Behavioral Problem	School Level					
	Elementary		Intermediate		Senior	
	Daily	Weekly	Daily	Weekly	Daily	Weekly
Alcohol or Drug Use	0	0	3	4	8	8
Cutting Class	0	1	26	18	43	23
Disruptive Behavior (horseplay)	36	28	62	20	43	26
Extortion	1	1	2	4	1	1
Insubordination	4	10	24	20	16	20
Physical Attack on Staff	1	1	0	1	0	0
Physical Attack on Student	6	10	8	18	1	4
Profanity	14	14	48	20	50	17
Smoking	0	0	17	8	51	8
Storing/Possessing Dangerous Weapons	0	0	2	2	0	2
Tardiness	17	24	51	24	69	16
Theft	3	7	10	14	7	14
Truancy	1	4	21	19	33	20
Vandalism	0	4	6	13	6	14
Verbal Abuse of Staff	4	9	16	20	9	14

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when they do occur, they are much more likely to occur at the secondary level than at the elementary school level.

- Regardless of the incident, school staff in secondary schools report being involved in or witness to more student misconduct than do staff in elementary schools. Differences between school levels for all 15 incidents are statistically significant.

Additional data on how frequently specific student misbehaviors occur are reported by school level in Appendix B.

Amount of Time Spent Administering Discipline

Administrators, counselors, and media specialists were asked, "On the average, what percentage of your time do you spend during a typical day administering discipline, including reprimanding students, assigning punishment, conferring with parents, supervising detention or in-school suspension, completing referrals, etc.?" The data show the following:

- On the average, staff estimate spending about 17 percent of their time administering discipline.

- Staff in elementary schools spend less time administering discipline than do staff in secondary schools (11 percent versus 20 percent).

- Assistant principals spend more time administering discipline than do other school staff. Assistant principals spend about 40 percent of their time administering discipline; principals spend about 15 percent, counselors 11 percent, and media specialists 14 percent. The amount of time assistant principals spend administering discipline on a daily basis is fairly high; however, the numbers must be viewed in light of the fact that a major responsibility of assistant principals is attending to discipline matters.

CAUSES OF STUDENT BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS

What are the perceived causes of student behavioral and discipline problems in MCPS? School administrators, counselors, media specialists, and teachers were asked to identify potential causes of student misconduct in terms of how frequently they cause student misconduct. The data show that misconduct is perceived to be caused both by problems the students bring to the classroom and the inability of teachers to handle some students.

Table 5 presents the mean responses of staff for the potential causes of student misconduct. The lower the mean, the less likely the item is a cause of student misconduct. The higher the mean the more likely the item is a cause of student misconduct.

TABLE 5

Causes of Student Misconduct

Cause of Student Misconduct	MEAN RESPONSE BY TYPE OF STAFF				
	Principal	Assistant Principal	Counselor	Media Specialist	Teacher
Inability of Student to Perform Satisfactorily	2.1	2.5	2.4	2.4	2.2
Inability of Teachers to Effectively Communicate with Some Students**	2.4	2.5	2.4.	2.4	2.2
Imbalance Between Student Rights and Students Responsibilities	2.0	2.4	2.3	2.2	1.8
Lack of Parental Support	1.9	2.2	1.9	2.3	1.8
Lack of Administrative Support	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.6
Student Disrespect for Authority	2.4	2.6	2.3	2.5	2.4
Teacher Inability to Maintain Discipline**	1.9	2.2	2.0	2.0	1.4
Failure of Teachers to Adhere to Existing Discipline Policies**	2.0	2.4	2.2	2.0.	*

*Question not asked

** Statistically significant differences found between the five staff groups on this cause.

Scale:
1 = Never a cause
2 = Occasionally a cause
3 = Frequently a cause

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The three major causes reported are:

- Inability of student to perform satisfactorily
- Student disrespect for authority
- Inability of teachers to effectively communicate with some students

Staff were also consistent in indicating that lack of administrative support was not a cause of student misbehavior. Beyond these, some important differences as a function of type of respondent were noted. Specifically, school administrators, counselors, and media specialists tend to say that student misconduct may result because teachers fail to adhere to existing discipline policy and/or are unable to maintain discipline in their classrooms. Teachers, in contrast, feel very strongly that misconduct is not due to their inability to maintain discipline.

ADMINISTERING AND PLANNING SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

How do schools administer and plan for discipline in MCPS? Are MCPS and local school discipline plans effective in reducing discipline problems? Do staff have enough authority to maintain discipline in their classrooms and schools?

Overall, the survey data show that the sample schools follow closely existing BOE policy on school discipline and feel that the policy is effective. Further, staff overwhelmingly report having the necessary authority to maintain discipline. The following survey findings support their conclusions:

- Nearly all the school administrators (98 percent) surveyed said their school had its own discipline plan. Survey results from both counselors and media specialists support this finding.
- Well over a majority (62 percent) of the supporting services workers surveyed said that the MCPS and local school discipline policy had been explained to them in such a manner that they could report inappropriate student behavior.
- The vast majority (90 percent) of administrators surveyed said teachers are required to discuss the local school discipline plan with their students. In addition, the majority (58 percent) of the teachers surveyed said they discussed their school's discipline plan with their class (students).
- The majority (83 percent) of the administrators surveyed said that their school had a standing discipline committee. Committees are made up of administrators, teachers, students, and parents.
- Most (88 percent) of the school administrators surveyed indicated that they thought the local school discipline plan was very effective or somewhat effective in reducing student discipline

problems. Overall, 69 percent of the teachers, 72 percent of the counselors, and 90 percent of the media specialists indicated the same.

- Finally, most staff (83 percent) feel they have all the authority needed to maintain a well-disciplined school building or classroom. In addition, related to this issue, the data show that the majority (81 percent) of the teachers surveyed said support from the school administrator in enforcing discipline is either very strong or adequate.

APPROACHES TO ENFORCEMENT OF DISCIPLINE

How do schools approach the enforcement of discipline? How effective are the approaches for reducing student misconduct? Should certain kinds of disciplinary actions be mandatory for certain kinds of student misconduct? The data show the following:

- School administrators agree in their ratings of the effectiveness of seven common disciplinary actions used by schools to reduce behavioral problems, generally feeling that none are "very effective." While out-of-school and in-school suspensions were rated as "very effective" most frequently, only a modest number of administrators (37 and 31 percent, respectively) responded in this manner.

- On the other hand, nearly all the actions cited receive support when the responses "very effective" and "somewhat effective" are combined. The disciplinary actions with the largest number of school administrators, 89 percent, saying they are "very effective" or "somewhat effective" in reducing student behavioral problems are "formally reporting students to the principal" and "calling student's parent or guardian." Out-of-school suspension and in-school suspension are similarly rated by 85 percent of the administrators. (See Table 6.)

- Somewhat less agreement exists concerning which actions should be considered mandatory for particular behavioral incidents, especially the less serious ones (see Table 7). While staff generally support existing Board policy with regard to the more serious actions (attack on staff or students, storing/possessing weapons, etc.), agreement regarding appropriate remedies for lesser misconduct is more elusive. Clearly, parental notification is seen as critical, but beyond that, proposed mandatory actions vary considerably.

TABLE 6

Disciplinary Actions That Reduce
Student Behavioral Problems

Disciplinary Action	Percentage of Staff Indicating That Action Is: Very Effective	Somewhat Effective	Somewhat Ineffective	Totally Ineffective
Assigning students to detention	6	73	12	8
Keeping student after school	12	69	14	4
Formally reporting students to the principal	29	60	8	0
Calling students' parent or guardian	29	60	0	0
Verbally reprimanding student	2	71	23	2
Out-of-school suspension	37	48	10	4
In-school suspension	31	54	2	2

Percentages will not add to 100 because of missing data or no response from some respondents.

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TABLE 7

Staff Response to Item: What Disciplinary Actions Should Be Mandatory for Each of the Incidents Below

Disciplinary Action* Staff Would Take	Physical Attack Staff	Physical Attack Student	Verbal Abuse Staff	Extortion	Theft	Cutting Class	Truancy	Tardiness	Insubordination	Profanity	Smoking	Vandalism	Dangerous Weapon	Alcohol-Drug Use	Horseplay
Action 1	2	5	9	5	5	8	11	4	8	7	9	5	3	4	6
Action 2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Action 3	32	26	19	28	27	4	5	4	11	4	10	22	28	24	3
Action 4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Action 5	2	4	7	7	7	12	21	16	13	14	15	8	4	7	11
Action 6	1	2	3	3	4	4	4	4	5	6	5	4	3	5	4
Action 7	4	10	18	11	9	12	22	5	15	11	16	12	7	11	9
Action 8	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1				
Action 9	36	44	25	41	41	6	7	6	16	5	12	35	48	40	4
Action 10	2	2	1	1	2	1	0	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	0
Action 11	0	1	3	1	1	16	5	32	7	19	10	3	0	2	22
Action 12	9	9	9	9	9	1	9	1	9	1	9	9	9	9	3
Action 13	1	4	13	3	4	35	22	26	21	31	20	8	2	4	33
Action 14	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	4

Note: Because of rounding percentages may add to more than 100.

*Action Codes Are:
1 = In-school suspension only
2 = In-school suspension/discretion of staff
3 = Out-of-school suspension
4 = Out-of-school suspension/discretion staff
5 = Call parents only
6 = Call parents/discretion of staff
7 = Call parents/in-school suspension
8 = Call parents/in-school suspension/discretion of staff
9 = Call parents/out-of-school suspension
10 = Call parents/out-of-school suspension/discretion of staff
11 = Detention only
12 = Detention/discretion of staff
13 = Detention/call parents
14 = Detention/call parents/discretion of staff

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PARENTAL PERCEPTIONS

Generally, the parents' reports also indicate that discipline is not perceived to be a significant problem (see Table 8). Although the parent data must be viewed cautiously because of the limited number of families surveyed, the following preliminary findings are of note:

- Student misconduct was not seen as a problem or only as a minor problem by the vast majority of respondents.
- Most parents (85 percent) assess the status of discipline in their child's classroom and school as excellent or satisfactory.
- Teacher and principal enforcement of discipline was rated "just about right" by approximately 75 percent of the parents.
- The vast majority (67 percent) of parents feel that teachers and principals have all the authority they need to maintain discipline.

Appendix C presents a more detailed report on the parent survey and its findings.

CONCLUSIONS

The survey data suggest that student behavior and discipline are not significant problems in MCPS. Discipline problems, where they exist, are limited in scope and severity. Board policy regarding discipline is implemented appropriately, and staff feel that they have the support necessary for dealing with insubordination where it occurs.

Although scattered reports on misconduct exist, and will continue to exist, the survey findings strongly suggest that MCPS need not overly concern itself with issues concerning discipline. Few, if any, changes appear called for, and it appears that maintenance of an already smoothly functioning system should be the system's goal.

TABLE 8

Parent Responses to Questions Regarding Frequency of Student Misconduct in the Classroom

Student Misconduct	Responses* 1	2	3	4	5	Total
	Percentage responding (n=112)					
Tardiness	4	5	11	36	44	100
Cutting class	8	5	13	47	26	100
Truancy	5	5	8	55	27	100
Insubordination	8	13	18	48	13	100
Disruptive behavior	10	15	33	35	7	100
Destruction of public property	9	8	9	62	13	100
Smoking	4	3	1	86	7	100
Alcohol/drug abuse	6	3	7	76	8	100
Theft	10	14	27	38	12	100
Physical attack on teacher	4	1	5	81	9	100
Physical attack on student	5	9	21	59	6	100
Verbal abuse	4	13	16	48	20	100
Extortion	3	3	3	64	28	100
Dangerous weapon	5	1	1	74	20	100
Profanity	11	18	30	28	14	100

*Responses are 1=definitely a problem; 2=somewhat of a problem; 3=only a minor problem; 4=not a problem; and 5=don't know/no opinion.

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APPENDIX A

FREQUENCIES OF RESPONSES TO A & S, TEACHER, AND SUPPORTING SERVICES STAFF QUESTIONNAIRES

April, 1983

APPENDIX A-1

Frequency Distributing For School Administrators, Counselors and Media Specialists

(Total Number of Respondents = 130)

Please respond to each of the questions below by checking (/) the space beside the choice, circling the code beside the answer of your choice, or writing the answer where applicable.

1. What is the level of the school to which you are currently assigned?

	Number	Percentage
Elementary	28	22
Middle/Intermediate School . .	28	22
Junior High	23	18
Senior High	51	39

2. What is your current job assignment?

Principal	27	21
Ass't Principal	25	19
Counselor	54	42
Media Specialist	24	19

3. How many years have you been assigned to this school in your present position? WRITE THE NUMBER. . . . Mean = 5.9 years

4. On the average, how would you describe the community served by your school?

Low Income	-	-
Lower/Middle	59	45
Upper/Middle Income	60	46
Upper Income	8	6
No response	3	2

5. On the average, how would you describe the overall academic achievement level of the pupils attending your school?

	Number	Percentage
Low Achievement Level	-	-
Lower/Average Achievement Level.	38	29
Upper/Average Achievement Level.	71	55
Upper Achievement Level.	20	15
No response	1	1

6. Do you perceive student behavior to be a significant problem in your school?

Yes	18	14
No	112	86

7. Approximately how many teachers on your staff do you perceive as having a problem with student behavior? Mean = 5.6 teachers

8. About how often have each of the incidents below occurred in your school this school year? Please respond only for incidents which you personally witnessed or in which you were directly involved. CIRCLE THE CODE OF YOUR CHOICE BESIDE EACH BEHAVIORAL PROBLEM.

	Every Day	About Once a Week	About Once a Month	Once or Twice a Year	Never	No Response
Physical Attack on Staff	0%	0%	2%	29%	67%	2%
Physical Attack on Students	5	16	37	28	11	3
Verbal Abuse of Staff	3	22	30	33	9	3
Extortion	2	5	15	36	39	5
Alcohol or Drug Use	3	5	21	34	30	7
Smoking	19	9	17	19	28	9
Theft	5	22	35	22	8	9
Cutting Class	44	21	11	14	8	3
Truancy	29	25	20	11	10	5
Tardiness	69	15	8	4	2	3
Insubordination	9	28	30	19	7	8
Profanity	34	25	21	12	4	5
Disruptive Behavior (noisy, horseplay, etc.)	47	30	17	2	0	4
Storing/Possessing Dangerous Weapons	0	0	2	41	49	9
Destruction of Public Property (vandalism)	1	5	32	39	19	5

9. Please indicate the disciplinary actions which you feel should be mandatory for each of the incidents below. For any incident you may name more than one. If you feel that the disciplinary action should be left to the discretion of the teacher or local school administration for a particular incident select "None." WRITE THE CODE(S) OF YOUR CHOICE IN THE SPACE(S) BESIDE EACH BEHAVIORAL INCIDENT.

Code	Answer Choice
1	Assigning student to detention
2	Calling students' parents or guardian
3	Out-of-school suspension
4	In-school suspension
5	None

	Percentage of Times Mentioned				
Incident Code =	1	2	3	4	5
Physical Attack on Staff	4%	69%	95%	7%	7%
Physical Attack on Students	11	73	73	25	12
Verbal Abuse of Staff	12	68	55	31	18
Extortion	5	66	74	17	13
Storing/Possessing Dangerous Weapons	4	61	90	6	10
Destruction of Property (vandalism)	14	70	59	29	19
Smoking	19	63	31	39	27
Alcohol or Drug Use	6	69	76	19	14
Theft	6	75	67	20	21
Cutting Class	50	73	8	33	22
Truancy	44	77	18	36	20
Tardiness	59	59	5	19	25
Insubordination	30	69	36	31	22
Disruptive Behavior (noisy, horseplay, etc.)	52	55	19	24	32
Profanity	47	55	14	23	30

10. How frequently are each of the following items below probably a cause of student misconduct in your school? CIRCLE THE CODE OF YOUR CHOICE BESIDE EACH POTENTIAL CAUSE OF STUDENT MISCONDUCT.

	Frequently A Cause	Occasionally A Cause	Never A Cause	No Response
Lack of Student Interest in Subject Content	35%	63%	1%	1%
Inability of Student to Perform Satisfactorily . .	45	55	0	0
Inability of Teachers to Effectively Communicate with Some Students	25	74	1	0
Imbalance Between Student Rights and Students Responsibilities	19	61	15	5
Lack of Parental Support . . .	30	65	4	1
Lack of Administrative Support	1	55	42	2
Student Disrespect for Authority	46	50	3	1
Failure of Teachers to Adhere to Existing Discipline Policies	16	68	15	1
Teacher Inability to Maintain Discipline	22	72	6	0

11. Based on your experience, how effective are the following disciplinary actions in reducing student behavioral problems? CIRCLE THE CODE OF YOUR CHOICE BESIDE EACH OF THE POTENTIAL DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS LISTED.

	Very Effective	Somehwat Effective	Somewhat Ineffective	Totally Ineffective	No Response
Assigning Students to Detention	8%	72%	15%	3%	2%
Keeping Student After School	12	68	13	2	5
Formally Reporting	27	64	5	0	4
Calling Students' Parent or Guardian	32	62	2	0	3
Verbally Reprimanding Student	2	65	26	4	2
Out-of-School Suspension	28	49	15	3	5
In-school Suspension	28	49	9	3	12

12. On the average, what percentage of your time do you spend during a typical day administering discipline, including reprimanding students, assigning punishment, conferring with parents, supervising detention or in-school suspensions, completing referrals, etc.? WRITE THE PERCENTAGE . . Mean = 17%

13. Have there been any behavioral problems which you have had a particularly difficult time dealing with this year?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	52	40
No	69	53
No Response	9	7

THREE MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED PROBLEMS ARE:

- o Lack of support from home
- o Chronic disruptive students (hard core troublemakers)
- o Truancy

14. Does your school have a local standing discipline committee?

Yes	91	70
No	32	25
No response	7	5

Which of the following types of people are members of your school's discipline committee? WRITE THE NUMBER BESIDE EACH TYPE IN THE SPACE PROVIDED.

Administrators (principals, ass't principals)	92	71
Classroom Teachers	89	69
Students	49	38
Parents	55	42
Others	19	15

15. Does your school have its own discipline plan describing specific infractions and the related consequences of those infractions?

Yes	119	92
No	9	7
No response	2	1

16. Has your school had any faculty meeting this school year in which the MCPS Discipline Plan was the major topic of discussion?

Yes	62	48
No	62	48
No response	6	4

17. Are teachers in your school required to discuss the Local School and/or MCPS Discipline Plan with their classes?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	97	75
No	25	19
No response	8	6

18. To what extent do you feel the MCPS and Local School Discipline Plans are effective in reducing student discipline problems in your school?

Very Effective	0	0
Somewhat Effective	78	60
Somewhat Ineffective	17	13
Not Effective	5	4
No response	29	22

19. Do you feel that you have all the authority you need to maintain a well-disciplined school building?

Yes	100	77
No	28	22
No response	2	1

20. Do you feel that your teachers have all the authority they need to maintain a well-disciplined classroom?

Yes	108	83
No	20	16
No response	2	1

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APPENDIX A-2

Frequency Distributions for Classroom Teachers

(Total Number of Respondents = 956)

1. In what grade are the majority of students you teach? (Check one.)

	Number	Percentage		Number	Percentage
Kindergarten. .	17	2	Seventh Grade	126	13
First Grade . .	32	3	Eighth Grade	125	13
Second Grade. .	29	3	Ninth Grade	97	10
Third Grade . .	25	3	Tenth Grade	75	8
Fourth Grade. .	29	3	Eleventh Grade	94	10
Fifth Grade . .	20	2	Twelfth Grade	49	5
Sixth Grade . .	56	6	Ungraded Special Education . .	45	5
			Missing.	166	17

2. In which subject area do you primarily teach? (Check one.)

Self-contained Elementary. . .	267	28
English/Language Arts	131	14
Mathematics	100	11
Social Studies	100	11
Science	82	9
Foreign Language	55	6
Health/Physical Education. . .	56	6
Self-contained Special Ed. . .	17	2
Other.	147	15

3. How many years have you been teaching?
   WRITE THE NUMBER . . . . . Mean = 13.40 years

4. How many years have you been teaching in your present school?
   WRITE THE NUMBER. . . . . Mean = 6.51 years

5. What is your sex?

Male	348	36
Female	580	61
Missing	28	3

6. Do you feel that student behavior is a significant problem in your school?

Yes.	296	31
No	614	64
No response.	46	5

7. About how often have each of the incidents below occurred in your classroom or school this school year. Please respond only for incidents which you personally witnessed or in which you were directly involved. CIRCLE THE CODE OF YOUR CHOICE BESIDE EACH PROBLEM.

Incident	Almost Everyday	About Once a Week	About Once a Month	Once or Twice a Year	Never	No Response
Physical Attack on Staff	0%	1%	1%	19%	75%	4%
Physical Attack on Students.....	6	13	21	35	23	4
Verbal Abuse of Staff.....	12	16	19	34	16	3
Extortion.....	2	2	7	18	62	10
Alcohol or Drug Use.....	5	5	11	22	49	8
Smoking.....	23	6	9	16	40	6
Theft.....	5	12	21	36	20	6
Cutting Class.....	22	18	20	19	18	4
Truancy.....	20	16	18	21	18	7
Tardiness.....	50	26	13	5	4	3
Insubordination.....	17	17	22	24	15	5
Profanity.....	40	18	15	17	8	3
Disruptive Behavior (noisy, horseplay, etc.).....	49	26	13	7	3	2
Storing or Possessing Dangerous Weapons.....	0	1	4	21	68	6
Destruction of Public Property (vandalism).....	4	13	17	39	23	4

8. Please indicate the disciplinary actions which you feel should be mandatory for each of the incidents below. For any incident you may indicate more than one. If you feel that the disciplinary action should be left to the discretion of the teacher or local school adminstration for a particular incident, select "None." WRITE THE CODE(S) OF YOUR CHOICE IN THE SPACE(S) BESIDE EACH PROBLEM.

Code	Answer Choice
1	Assigning student to detention
2	Calling students' parents or guardian
3	Out-of-school suspension
4	In-school suspension
5	None

Incident	Code =	Percentage of Times Mentioned				
		1	2	3	4	5
Physical Attack on Staff		6%	64%	86%	12%	7%
Physical Attack on Students		11	67	81	23	7
Verbal Abuse of Staff		22	68	46	33	8
Extortion		9	66	68	20	8
Theft		10	67	65	21	10
Cutting Class		60	69	9	26	9
Truancy		34	77	14	36	11
Tardiness		65	54	3	13	16
Insubordination		38	69	25	30	15
Profanity		48	59	10	19	22
Smoking		31	60	26	26	19
Destruction of Public Property (vandalism)		11	69	66	22	10
Storing or Possessing Dangerous Weapons		5	66	80	13	10
Student Under the Influence of Alcohol or Drugs		5	68	70	20	11
Disruptive Behavior (noisy, horseplay, etc.)		59	60	12	25	22

9. Have there been any behavioral problems this year which you have had problems dealing with?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	317	33
No	606	63
No response	33	4

THREE MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED PROBLEMS ARE:

- o Horseplay, noisy behavior
- o Insubordination
- o Fighting

10. How frequently are each of the following items below a probable cause of student misconduct in your classroom or school. CIRCLE THE CODE BESIDE THE ANSWER OF YOUR CHOICE

Probable Causes of Student Misconduct	Frequently A Cause	Occasionally A Cause	Never A Cause	No Response
Lack of Student Interest in Subject Content	22%	68%	9%	1%
Inability of Student to Perform Satisfactorily	26	61	11	1
Inability to Effectively Communicate with Some Students	7	66	24	3
Imbalance Between Student Rights and Student Responsibilities	21	36	37	6
My Inability to Maintain Discipline	2	38	56	4
Lack of Parental Support	25	56	17	2
Lack of Administrative Support	10	39	48	3
Student Disrespect for Authority	43	47	9	2

11. How many students cause discipline problems in the first class of the day that you teach? WRITE THE NUMBER.

Mean = 1.34

12. How adequate is your school's discipline plan in terms of clarity, enforcibility, scope, etc.?

	Number	Percentage
Very adequate	384	40
Somewhat adequate	366	38
Somewhat inadequate	133	14
Totally inadequate	29	3
Don't know	18	2
No response	26	3

13. Did you attend any faculty meeting this school year in which the MCPS Discipline Plan was a major topic of discussion?

Yes	432	45
No	485	51
No response	39	4

14. Have you discussed the MCPS Discipline Plan with your classes this school year?

Yes	548	57
No	380	40
No response	28	3

15. To what extent do you feel the MCPS and Local School Discipline plans have been effective in reducing student discipline problems in your school?

Very Effective	145	15
Somewhat Effective	2	1
Somewhat Ineffective	510	53
Totally Ineffective	180	19
No response	55	6

16. How would you rate the level of support you receive from the school administrators in enforcing discipline?

Very strong support	395	41
Adequate support	349	37
Somewhat inadequate support	138	14
Very poor support	33	5
No response	41	4

17. Do you feel that you have all the authority you need to maintain a well-disciplined classroom?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	695	73
No	241	25
No response	20	2

ADDITIONAL AUTHORITY TEACHERS WOULD LIKE TO HAVE: (ITEMS MENTIONED BY AT LEAST 10% OF THE TEACHERS)

- More support from home
- More support from principal
- More autonomy and less red tape
- Right to remove students from class and school

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APPENDIX A-3

Frequency Distributions for Supporting Services Workers

(Total Number of Respondents= 617)

Please answer each of the following questions by checking (/) the space beside the answer of your choice.

1. What is your job classification?	Number	Percentage
Building Services Manager	29	5
Building Services Worker	99	16
Plant Equipment Operator	12	2
Safety & Security Ass't.	8	1
Cafeteria Manager	24	4
Cafeteria Worker	118	19
Teacher Ass't.	130	21
Secretary	86	14
Other, or Missing	111	18

2. How many years have you been working in this same school?		
Less than 3 years	187	30
3-5 years	141	23
More than 5 years	267	43
Missing	22	4

3. What is the level of your school?		
Elementary	175	28
Middle	69	11
Intermediate	37	6
Junior High	106	17
Senior High	212	34
Missing	18	3

4. About how often have each of the incidents below occured in your school this school year? Please respond only for incidents which you personally witnessed or in which you were directly involved.

CIRCLE THE CODE OF YOUR CHOICE BESIDE EACH BEHAVIORAL PROBLEM.

Incidents	Almost Every Day	About Once a Week	About Once a Month	Once or Twice a Year	Never	No Response
Physical Attack on Staff	1%	1%	1%	12%	67%	18%
Physical Attack on Students	4	4	13	19	41	19
Verbal Abuse of Staff	8	9	12	20	35	17
Extortion	1	1	2	6	66	24
Alcohol or Drug Use	2	2	6	13	56	20
Smoking	23	3	4	8	45	17
Theft	8	6	11	22	33	17
Cutting Class	22	7	7	7	38	19
Truancy	13	8	8	6	41	25
Tardiness	30	9	8	7	26	20
Insubordination	13	9	11	10	34	23
Profanity	34	12	10	10	19	15
Disruptive Behavior (noisy, horseplay)	40	16	12	7	13	12
Storing/Possessing Dangerous Weapons	2	2	2	11	62	23
Destruction of Property (vandalism)	5	7	11	23	33	21

5. Do you feel that student behavior is a significant problem in your school?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	155	25
No	418	68
No Response	44	7

6. Which of the following behaviors do you feel are the biggest problems in your school? CHECK ONLY 3.

Physical Attack on Staff	10	2
Physical Attack on Students	54	10
Verbal Abuse of Staff	107	20
Extortion	5	1
Storing or Possessing Dangerous Weapons	4	1
Destruction of Public Property (vandalism)	104	19
Smoking	111	21
Alcohol or Drug Use	40	7
Theft	86	16
Cutting Class	140	26
Truancy	44	8
Tardiness	136	25
Insubordination	63	12
Disruptive Behavior (noisy, horseplay, etc.)	298	56
Profanity	188	35

7. When you see a student misbehaving in school, what actions do you usually take? Check all that apply.

	Number	Percentage
Report the Incident to a Teacher	289	47
Report the Incident to the Principal	300	49
Speak to the Student Myself	424	69
Ignore the Students Action	54	9

8. Do you feel that students are disciplined appropriately when they misbehave in your school?

Yes, Always	248	40
Sometimes	293	48
No, Hardly Ever	34	6
No Response	42	7

9. Has the MCPS or local school discipline policy been explained to you so that you can report inappropriate student behavior?

Yes	359	58
No	221	36
No Response	37	6

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APPENDIX B

FREQUENCY OF STUDENT BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS BY SCHOOL LEVEL

TABLE B-1

Staff Responses to Item: About How Often Have you Witnessed or Been Involved in Student Behavior Problems in Your School?
-Elementary Schools-

Behavioral Problem	Responses				
	1	2	3	4	5
Alcohol or Drug Use	98%	2%	0%	0%	0%
Cutting Class	71	25	3	1	0
Disruptive Behavior (horseplay)	10	11	17	28	36
Extortion	83	14	2	1	1
Insubordination	42	24	20	10	4
Physical Attack on Staff	82	15	2	1	1
Physical Attack on Student	38	27	19	10	6
Profanity	25	25	23	14	14
Smoking	93	6	1	0	0
Storing/Possessing Dangerous Weapons	81	18	1	0	0
Tardiness	26	14	19	24	17
Theft	34	41	15	7	3
Truancy	60	26	9	4	1
Vandalism	42	42	12	4	0
Verbal Abuse of Staff	40	35	13	9	4

Note: Due to rounding percentages may add to more than 100.

Responses:
1 = Never
2 = Once or twice a year
3 = About once a month
4 = About once a week
5 = Almost every day

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TABLE B-2

Staff Responses to Item: About How Often Have you Witnessed or Been Involved in Student Behavior Problems in Your School?
-Intermediate Schools-

Behavioral Problem	Responses 1	2	3	4	5
Alcohol or Drug Use	54%	28%	11%	4%	3%
Cutting Class	15	19	22	18	26
Disruptive Behavior (horseplay)	5	4	9	20	62
Extortion	58	24	12	4	2
Insubordination	16	17	24	20	24
Physical Attack on Staff	73	24	2	1	0
Physical Attack on Student	21	27	25	18	8
Profanity	8	13	11	20	48
Smoking	35	25	16	8	17
Storing/Possessing Dangerous Weapons	69	24	4	2	2
Tardiness	9	3	12	24	51
Theft	26	28	23	14	10
Truancy	23	17	20	19	21
Vandalism	26	36	20	13	6
Verbal Abuse of Staff	17	25	22	20	16

Note: Due to rounding percentages may add to more than 100.

Responses:
1 = Never
2 = Once or twice a year
3 = About once a month
4 = About once a week
5 = Almost every day

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TABLE B-3

Staff Responses to Item: About How Often Have you Witnessed or Been Involved in Student Behavior Problems in Your School?
-Senior High Schools-

Behavioral Problem	Responses 1	2	3	4	5
Alcohol or Drug Use	33%	30%	21%	8%	8%
Cutting Class	10	6	19	23	43
Disruptive Behavior (horseplay)	7	7	17	26	43
Extortion	80	13	6	1	1
Insubordination	20	24	20	20	16
Physical Attack on Staff	84	16	0	0	0
Physical Attack on Student	38	40	17	4	1
Profanity	9	11	13	17	50
Smoking	24	10	7	8	51
Storing/Possessing Dangerous Weapons	71	24	4	2	0
Tardiness	8	3	5	16	69
Theft	25	33	22	14	7
Truancy	16	12	19	20	33
Vandalism	24	35	21	14	6
Verbal Abuse of Staff	22	36	19	14	9

Note: Due to rounding percentages may add to more than 100.

Responses:
1 = Never
2 = Once or twice a year
3 = About once a month
4 = About once a week
5 = Almost every day

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APPENDIX C

THE PARENT SURVEY

During the months of May and June, the Department of Educational Accountability (DEA) conducted a pilot test of a parent survey instrument on discipline. The purpose of the pilot was to test a survey instrument for possible use during the 1983/84 school year (see Table C-1 for a list of the questions asked parents). DEA surveyed, by telephone, a small sample of randomly selected parents from six of the sample schools which had been included in the 1982/83 survey of school staff. In total, 112 parents were interviewed. The data collected from the interviews reveal the following:

1. Overall, most parents consider student behavior in their child's classroom to be either "a minor problem" or "not a problem." See Table C-2 on parents' ratings of 15 different student behaviors and their perceptions of them being a problem in their child's classroom.

2. Most parents (72 percent) surveyed said their child's teachers' enforcement of discipline in the classroom is "about right." In addition, 75 percent of the parents said that the principal's enforcement of discipline is "about right."

3. Most parents (85 percent) assess the present status of discipline in their child's classroom as either "excellent" or "satisfactory." In addition, the same percentage of parents assess the present status of discipline in their child's school as either "excellent" or "satisfactory."

4. Most parents (67 percent) feel their child's teachers have all the authority needed to maintain a well-disciplined classroom. Parents (67 percent) also feel that the principal has all the authority needed to maintain a well-disciplined school building.

5. Most parents (62 percent) report receiving information from their child's school on how discipline is handled in their child's school. In summary the parent data show that parents are generally quite pleased with the manner in which discipline is handled in their child's classroom and the school building in general. In addition, many parents report that, based on their experiences, student misconduct in the classroom is either not a problem or only a minor problem.

The data from the pilot survey have to be balanced, however, against the following: (1) the sample size is small; and (2) in many situations parents simply stated that they knew little about student behavior and discipline in their child's school and would prefer not giving opinions or perceptions about student behavior and discipline.

Based on the field test experience, DEA would like to make the following recommendations concerning how a large scale parent survey might be conducted:

1. The survey should be conducted as a telephone interview. The pilot telephone interviews, on the average, took no more than 15 minutes.

2. The survey instrument should be more open-ended, allowing parents the chance to identify specific student behaviors that they believe are significant problems in the classroom and school building.

3. The survey sample should use the same sampling methodology as was used for the survey of school staff, surveying adequate numbers of parents from each school to assure statistical representation.

In the final analysis, the decision regarding whether or not to conduct a large-scale parent survey should be weighed against the results of the staff survey, the preliminary results from the pilot test, and the cost involved (part-time staff to conduct telephone interviews). The task force might also want to consider recent findings from the community survey conducted by the Department of Information. The findings from this survey and the findings from DEA's surveys, both the staff survey and the parent survey, suggest that discipline is not a major problem in MCPS schools.

TABLE C-1

Questions From the Telephone Interview Protocol

NOTE: With the exception of Question 1, all questions report the percentage of parents selecting each possible response. Responses to Question 1 are summarized separately in Attachment 2. All percentages are based on a total number (n) of 112. In cases where percentages do not add to 100, it is either because of missing data, no response given by parent, or rounding.

Question 1. I will read some incomplete statements which you may or may not consider to be a student behavior problem in your child's classroom. Use one of the following responses to complete each statement I will read: 1=definitely a problem; 2=somewhat of a problem; 3=only a minor problem; 4=not a problem; and 5=don't know/no opinion.

STATEMENTS

a. In my child's classroom tardiness is.....
b. In my child's classroom students cutting class is.....
c. In my child's classroom truancy is.....
d. In my child's classroom insubordination is.....
e. In my child's classroom disruptive behavior (horseplay) is.....
f. In my child's classroom destruction of public property is.....
g. In my child's classroom smoking is.....
h. In my child's classroom alcohol/drug abuse is.....
i. In my child's classroom theft is.....
j. In my child's classroom physical attack on the teacher is.....
k. In my child's classroom physical attack on students is.....
l. In my child's classroom verbal abuse of the teacher is.....
m. In my child's classroom extortion is.....
n. In my child's classroom storing or possessing dangerous weapons by student is.....
o. In my child's classroom profanity is.....

Question 2. Other than the student behavior problems just mentioned, are there any other student behavior problems which take place in your child's classroom that you are concerned about? (1=yes [10%], 2=no [90%]).

Question 3. Think for a moment about your child's teachers' enforcement of discipline in the classroom. Would you characterize enforcement as: 1=too strict? [1%]; 2=about right? [72%]; and 3=too lenient? [25%]

Question 4. Do you feel that your child's teacher has all the authority needed to maintain a well disciplined classroom? (1=yes [67%], 2=no [27%]).

Question 5. Overall, would you assess the present status of discipline in your child's classroom as: 1=excellent? [31%]; 2=satisfactory? [55%]; 3=less than satisfactory? [10%]; and 4=poor? [4%].

Question 6. Are there any student behavior problems which take place in your child's school that you are concerned about? (1=yes [33%], 2=no [67%]).

Question 7. Think for a moment about how the principal in your child's school enforces discipline throughout the school. Would you characterize his/her enforcement as: 1=too strict? [3%]; 2=about right? [75%]; and 3=too lenient? [18%].

Question 8. Do you feel that the principal in your child's school has all the authority needed to maintain a well-disciplined school? (1=yes [67%], 2=no [22%]).

Question 9. Have you received any information from your child's school about the MCPS policy on discipline or the local schools policy on discipline this year? (1=yes [62%], 2=no [20%], 3=don't remember [18%]).

Question 10. Overall, would you assess the present status of discipline in your child's school as: 1=excellent? [23%]; 2=satisfactory? [63%]; 3=less than satisfactory? [12%]; and 4=poor? [2%].

Question 11. Who do you believe should be primarily responsible for student behavior at school? (1=parent [23%]; 2=teacher [18%]; 3=principal [10%]; 4=students [17%]; and 5=combination of all the previous [32%].

Question 12. Do you have any additional comments or suggestions which you feel should be included in the existing MCPS discipline policy or implementation procedures which would benefit MCPS? (1=yes [29%], 2=no [71%]. Suggestions mentioned by parents who responded yes:

- o Dress code
- o Better communications
- o In-school suspensions
- o Stricter punishment
- o More support for teachers

TABLE C-2

Parent Responses to Question 1: Frequency of Student Misconduct in the Classroom

Student Misconduct	Responses* 1	2	3	4	5	Total
	Percentage responding (n=112)					
Tardiness	4	5	11	36	44	100
Cutting class	8	5	13	47	26	100
Truancy	5	5	8	55	27	100
Insubordination	8	13	18	48	13	100
Disruptive behavior	10	15	33	35	7	100
Destruction of public property	9	8	9	62	13	100
Smoking	4	3	1	86	7	100
Alcohol/drug abuse	6	3	7	76	8	100
Theft	10	14	27	38	12	100
Physical attack on teacher	4	1	5	81	9	100
Physical attack on student	5	9	21	59	6	100
Verbal abuse	4	13	16	48	20	100
Extortion	3	3	3	64	28	100
Dangerous weapon	5	1	1	74	20	100
Profanity	11	18	30	28	14	100

*Responses are 1=definitely a problem; 2=somewhat of a problem; 3=only a minor problem; 4=not a problem; and 5=don't know/no opinion.